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ABSTRACT

This paper is a biographical essay on Vartan Gregorian, appointed president of Carnegie Corporation in 1997. The focus of the research is on Vartan Gregorian's accomplishments as an educator, as provost of the University of Pennsylvania, as director and president of the New York Public Library, and, most recently, as the president of Brown University. This paper details his opinions and beliefs concerning the role of libraries and librarians in the information age. Research methods included a review of the available literature by and about Vartan Gregorian and a telephone interview with him on August 13, 1997. Topics discussed include biographical background; management style; fundraising; Gregorian's presidency of Brown University; the telephone interview; quality of library service to the public; implications of technological advancement on access to information; intellectual freedom; literacy; books in the electronic library; library and librarian roles in the information age; Vartan Gregorian's ability to combine visions of the ideal with practical means of attaining them; and future career plans and mission. The interview questions are appended. Contains 31 references. (Author/DLS)

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ED 423 904

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

VARTAN GREGORIAN : A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY WITH SPECIFIC FOCUS ON HIS VIEWS CONCERNING LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS

A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO

THE SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF FINE AND PROFESSIONAL ARTS

BY

MARY MONAHAN

KENT, OHIO

NOVEMBER 1997

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a biographical essay on Vartan Gregorian, newly appointed president of Carnegie Corporation. The focus of the research is on Vartan Gregorian's accomplishments as an educator, as provost of the University of Pennsylvania, as director and president of the New York Public Library and most recently as the president of Brown University. Vartan Gregorian has been a highly visible, forceful advocate for educational reforms. These reforms very much involve enhancing and optimizing the resources of libraries for the benefit of students as well as the population at large. The role of libraries and librarians in the information age continues to be a hotly debated issue. Libraries, especially public ones seem to be struggling to determine their mission in the wake of the enormous impact technologies have had on the way libraries provide services. The focus of this research is on Vartan Gregorian's opinions and beliefs concerning the role of libraries and librarians in the information age. As a lifelong educator and former library director, he has had an enormous influence on library administration. Therefore, his beliefs about the function of libraries and what they can and should be are relevant and influential. This paper details those opinions.

Master's Research Paper by

Mary E. Monahan

B.A., College of the Holy Cross, 1977

M.L.S., Kent State University, 1997

Approved by

Adviser Lois Buttlar Date 11-20-97

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Vartan Gregorian's distinguished career in education including his now legendary revitalization of the New York Public Library has certainly earned him well-deserved recognition as an influential figure in library administration. There exists, therefore, a need to record his views and opinions about the profession as a resource for current research as well as for historical value.

When Vartan Gregorian assumed the presidency of the New York Public Library in 1981 he took on a decaying institution that had largely lost the interest and respect of the community it served. By the time he left the position in 1989 the NYPL had its dignity and many of its buildings restored -- which involved over $400 million for renovations.[1]

Vartan Gregorian's spirit, imagination and vision captured the attention of New Yorkers. He made donating to the NYPL a trendy thing to do. As author, Calvin Trillin noted in his poetic tribute, "The Man Who Saved the Library: An Ode to Vartan Gregorian," that Gregorian pried money from

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[1]Vartan Gregorian, "You Must Know the Past," Business Week, 26 March 1990, 148.

"wealthy folks with cash so old/that some of it was growing mold."[2]

The NYPL is enormously complex in terms of services as well as its physical structure. Comprised of four major research facilities and eighty-one branch libraries, this institution serves nearly a million cardholders with a collection of over 45 million items.[3]

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to present a biographical essay about Vartan Gregorian, current president of Carnegie Corporation. The focus of the paper is Vartan Gregorian's views on the role of libraries and librarians in the information age. While news of Vartan Gregorian's achievements has appeared frequently in the popular press and occasionally in the library professional journals no one source exists which very specifically addresses these views.

Vartan Gregorian has been a highly visible, forceful advocate for educational reforms. These reforms very much involve enhancing and optimizing the resources of libraries for the benefit of students as well as the population at large. The role of libraries and librarians in the information age continues to be a hotly debated issue. Libraries, especially public ones seem to

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[2]Calvin Trillin, "The Man Who Saved the Library: An Ode to Vartan Gregorian," New York Times Book Review, (February 5, 1989) : 15.

[3]Harriot, Esther, ed., Annual Report of the New York Public Library (New York : Eastern Press, Inc., 1988).

technologies have had on the way libraries provide services.

The focus of this research is on Vartan Gregorian's opinions and beliefs concerning the role of libraries and librarians in the information age. As a lifelong educator and former library director, he has had an enormous influence on library administration. Therefore, his beliefs about the function of libraries and what they can and should be are relevant and influential. This paper details those opinions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed for this paper came from varied sources owing to the many different aspects of Vartan Gregorian's career. These sources are also widely varied in focus owing to the personality of Vartan Gregorian himself.

The material available covered certain aspects and/or periods of Vartan Gregorian's career. Much attention in the literature has been devoted to his fundraising accomplishments. His views on the role of libraries and librarians, however, are not specifically addressed in any current source. Previously published material contains some perceptions about the library profession, but not in great detail.

Philip Hamburger's two-part profile of Vartan Gregorian, "Searching for Gregorian", which appeared in The New Yorker in 1986[4] is a lengthy -- over twenty pages -- and absorbing interview with Gregorian which also contains brief interviews with those who have worked closely with him including Barbara Tuchman and Brooke Astor. Gregorian recounts his experiences in academia and significant details of his childhood and youth as well as views on

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[4]Philip Hamburger, "Searching for Gregorian : Part I," The New Yorker 62 (April 14, 1986) : 45-53.

his work at the New York Public Library.[5] Published in 1986 this interview was the result of several meetings with Gregorian.

Rolling Stone magazine published an interview by Norman Atkins in 1991.[6] Two years into his presidency at Brown University Vartan Gregorian discusses the role of the university president, the debate over Western civilization coursework among academics, the New Curriculum of Brown University and some discussion of his teaching experiences in the sixties.

"Mission Accomplished" by Marc Wortman is a six-page article[7] chronicling the presidency of Vartan Gregorian at Brown University. The article highlights Gregorian's achievements at Brown in terms of fundraising as well as his opinions about the role of the university. Included are comments about Gregorian from faculty, staff and students.

Sara Calian's "Vartan : A Family Man"[8] is the only source, albeit brief, which provided very personal observations about Gregorian from an immediate

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[5]Philip Hamburger, "Searching for Gregorian : Part II." The New Yorker 62 (April 21, 1986) : 53-64.

[6]Norman Atkins, "The Making of the President," Rolling Stone 613 (March 21, 1991) : 63-65, 90-91.

[7]Marc Wortman, "Mission Accomplished," Brown Alumni Monthly 5 (July 1997) : 27-33.

[8]Sara Calian, "Vartan : A Family Man," Brown Daily Herald, 28 October 1988; available from http://www.netspace.org/herald/pleasure/Vartan/Family Man, Internet accessed 26 August 1997.

family member. Youngest son Dareh offered some details of life with Gregorian and his thoughts about Gregorian as a father.

Current Biography[9] provides a detailed chronological account of Vartan Gregorian's life from his childhood in Iran, his academic career to his accomplishments at the New York Public Library. Last updated in 1985 this work does not include information about his final years in New York or his presidency of Brown University.

Marquis Who's Who[10] provides just the facts in a chronological list of the significant dates of Vartan Gregorian's life including schools attended, academic posts, honorary degrees and awards.

The annual reports of the New York Public Library were extremely helpful in terms of measuring the progress made by that institution under Gregorian's direction. These reports provide detailed information about major monetary donations to the library[11] as a result of the fund-raising campaign implemented by Gregorian. In addition to the financial details, these reports give a very precise definition of the mission of that library and the issues

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[9]Current Biography, 1985 ed. s.v. "Vartan Gregorian," 157-161.

[10]Marquis Who's Who Fifty "Great Americans" : Vartan Gregorian, available from http://roodrof.com/mww/greatamer4/html/;ffga, accessed 26 August 1997.

[11]Harriot Esther, ed., Annual Report of the New York Public Library (New York : Eastern Press, Inc., 1988), 5-94.

affecting the library at that time. The reports also address the future of the library and the planning involved for the library to continue to offer the best services.[12] Although Gregorian assumed his position at the library in 1981, annual reports prior to 1985 were not available. Staff members indicated that the 1985 report was the first substantial report published.

Reports from the Brown University Libraries were also consulted to ascertain Gregorian's impact. BiblioFile, the Brown University Libraries newsletter, gave detailed financial information about the fund-raising campaign and the benefits to the libraries.[13] Also the issues of acquisitions, preservation and planning for the library of the future were delineated.[14]

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[12]Gregory Long, ed., Annual Report of the New York Public Library (New York : Eastern Press, Inc., 1985), 6-104.

[13]Merrily Taylor, ed., "The Brown University Library and the Challenge to the Finish," BiblioFile (Fall 1996), available from http://www.brown.edu/library/homepage.html; Internet accessed 6 September 1997.

[14]Merrily Taylor, ed., "Preserving the Past, Entering the Future," BiblioFile (Spring 1997), available from http://www.brown.edu/library/homepage.html; Internet accessed 6 September 1997.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In order to complete this project a variety of methods were employed. A thorough investigation of the available literature about and by Vartan Gregorian was conducted.

Articles in business magazines such as Fundraising Management and Business Week concentrate on Gregorian's management style and fundraising abilities. Owing to his strong personal appeal many articles have appeared in popular magazines. He has been mentioned in the pages of Vogue, Time, and Newsweek. Many national newspaper articles have chronicled Vartan Gregorian's appointments and achievements. The annual reports of the New York Public Library were reviewed to gain insight into his management style and administration philosophy.

Searching the World Wide Web using various search strategies was very helpful. Hotbot alone yielded over 300 citations. The student newspaper Brown Daily Herald and Brown Alumni Monthly magazine accessed through the Web search contained many articles relevant to this research. The newsletter of the Brown University Library, BiblioFile, also provided information regarding the library's philosophy and planning. Vartan Gregorian's book, The Emergence of

Modern Afghanistan, which includes research presented as a Ph.D. dissertation at Stanford University in 1964 proved to be insightful.

A key part of this investigation was the telephone interview with Vartan Gregorian. The interview was taped with Vartan Gregorian's permission. It was agreed beforehand that the interview would take place on August 13, 1997 at 4:00 PM. The interview was scheduled for 30 minutes, but lasted fifty-two minutes. A list of interview questions was submitted to him prior to the interview (see Appendix A). The scope of the questions was deliberately broad in nature in order to elicit expansive responses.

CHAPTER 4

VARTAN GREGORIAN : A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Biographical Background Information

Vartan Gregorian was born in Tabriz, a town in northern Iran, on April 8, 1934. At the age of seven he suffered the loss of his mother. His maternal grandmother became a source of comfort and guidance to the young Gregorian, particularly after his father's remarriage, which resulted in some conflict within the family.[15]

It was in this atmosphere that this boy found solace and work as a page in a local American library, an experience which he claims "changed his life."[16] The offerings in that library allowed him to escape, to hope and learn.

Always a good student, a friend introduced him to a diplomat who encouraged and assisted him in going to Beirut to attend College Armenien. After graduating in 1955 he received a scholarship to Stanford from which he received his B.A. in History in 1958. He stayed on at Stanford for his graduate work and received his Ph.D. in history and humanities in 1964.

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[15]Philip Hamburger, "Searching for Gregorian: Part I," The New Yorker (April 14, 1986) : 50.

[16]Current Biography, 1985 ed. s.v. "Vartan Gregorian," 157.

While at Stanford, Gregorian met his wife, the former Clare Russell, whom he married in 1960. They have three sons: Vahe, Raffi and Dareh.

San Francisco State College was his first teaching post where he rose from instructor to associate professor of history during the period of 1962 through 1968.

Positions as associate professor at UCLA 1968 and the University of Texas 1968-1972, where he achieved full professorship followed. In 1972 he accepted a position at the University of Pennsylvania where he remained until 1980. While at the University of Pennsylvania, Gregorian entered into administrative posts first as dean, then as provost 1978-1980. In a career distinguished by great success, Gregorian experienced his only disappointment at the University of Pennsylvania when he was not offered the presidency of the university which he and many believed he deserved.

It was at this point in his career when he was approached by the powers that be at the New York Public Library (NYPL). Several offers from other universities had not been accepted by him anticipating his acceptance of the presidency at University of Pennsylvania.

In 1981, he took on the post at the NYPL. In 1989 he left NYPL a much transformed institution. Assuming the presidency of Brown University came

next in 1989. In 1997 he announced his resignation from Brown. In the summer of 1997 he assumed the presidency of Carnegie Corporation, one of the country's most notable foundations.

During his career, Vartan Gregorian has received over forty honorary degrees and national and international awards.

He has also been involved with a number of foundations, all of which are involved in educational issues including the Annenburg Foundation, Gates Foundation and, now, as president of Carnegie Corporation.

Management Style :

The New York Public Library

Vartan Gregorian took on the task of revitalizing the NYPL, as he does with every appointment, with a strong sense of the mission of the job. In his first meeting with library staff he addressed them as "my fellow educators."[17] This set a tone for a library administration which not only crusaded to restore the physical structure, but also the confidence of the staff. The 1985 Annual Report of the NYPL is dedicated to the library staff and contains profiles of staff members for their significant contributions.[18]

To understand the machinations of this library system, Gregorian read everything available about the library and became acquainted with a large number of the professional staff. He visited about twenty of the branches and explored every nook and cranny of the library on 42nd Street.

A stint at the reference desk in Room 315, the main catalog room, which he called "a terrifying experience,"[19] provided him with an understanding and appreciation of library staff and duties.

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[17]Philip Hamburger, "Searching for Gregorian: Part I," The New Yorker 62 (April 14, 1986) : 46.

[18]Gregory Long, ed., Annual Report of the New York Public Library (New York : Eastern Press, Inc., 1986), 6.

[19]Philip Hamburger, "Searching for Gregorian: Part I," The New Yorker 62 (April 14, 1986) : 61.

Vartan Gregorian worked tirelessly to determine the needs of the library in terms of funding. The Campaign for the Library originated in 1985 sought to publicize the plight of the library to the public, private institutions, local, state and federal government.

His efforts in fundraising for the NYPL won him much acclaim. The money came pouring in : $10,000,000 from the Astor Foundation, $1,250,000 from Exxon Corporation, $1,000,000 from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, to name a few.[20]

Vartan Gregorian admirers, of which there are many, believe his success at turning the NYPL around resulted from a combination of characteristics: his work ethic -- 17-hour days are normal, his great intellect and the power of his personality. People found it difficult to say no to Vartan Gregorian.

Vartan Gregorian cautioned throughout his presidency at the NYPL that much of the money raised was being used to undo the damage sustained in the 1970s because of low funding. The issues that plagued the NYPL were addressed in the annual reports. These included the necessity of a continued strategy to raise funds for acquisitions, especially new technologies and preservation.

Vartan Gregorian's presidency at the NYPL is a remarkable chapter in that library's history which will become even more significant with the passage

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[20]Gregory Long, ed., Annual Report of the New York Public Library (New York : Eastern Press, Inc., 1985), 7.

of time. His accomplishments at the NYPL are all the more remarkable when his first visit to the library is considered. In 1956 when Vartan Gregorian arrived in New York he ventured to the New York Public Library and headed for the Slavic literature section but, overwhelmed, he left the building because as he said

> I simply could not believe that someone could walk up those big front steps and enter that extraordinary building without any questions, without any identification, no proving this or proving that, and no one asking are you liberal, conservative, or wishy-washy.[21]

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[21]Philip Hamburger, "Searching for Gregorian : Part I," The New Yorker 62 (14 April 1986) : 56.

Brown University

Vartan Greorian took on the presidency of Brown University in 1989 with the same sense of purpose he has brought to every position. In an interview about his position at Brown he stated," if I did not believe in the mission I would not take the job."[22]

Brown Univerity's financial position had been stabilized during the presidency of Vartan Gregorian's predecessor. However, a stabilized financial situation did not mean all was well. Again, Vartan Gregorian found himself in a position where a carefully planned fund-raising strategy needed to be implemented. A campaign was initiated which ultimately raised $534 million by July 1996.[23] This brought Brown, formerly the least endowed of the ivy league schools, into a position ahead of Colgate and the University of Pennsylvania.[24]

During Vartan Gregorian's presidency, the University libraries also benefited considerably from increased funding. The libraries added one million volumes to the holdings for a total of nearly 3,000,000.[25] During this period an

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[22]Norman Atkins, "The Making of the President," Rolling Stone 613 (March 21, 1991) : 6.

[23]Judith Miller, "Carnegie Corporation Picks a Chief in Gregorian," New York Times, 7 January 1997, B1.

[24]Marc Wortman, "Mission Accomplished," Brown Alumni Monthly 5 (July 1997) : 30.

[25]Merrily Taylor, ed., "The Brown University Library and the Challenge to the Finish," BiblioFile (Fall 1996), available from http://www.brown.edu/library/homepage.html; Internet accessed 6 September 1997.

addition to the John Carter Brown Library, which houses works from the 15th to the 19th centuries, which focuses on the discovery of the new world was built.

At Brown University, as was the case at the New York Public Library, a very careful strategy is evident in reviewing library reports. The strategy covers three specific areas. Firstly, the need for funding for acquisitions of all types of resources. Preparing for the library of the future is the second objective. This goal involves having the necessary funding on hand as new technological resources are introduced. The third goal is the preservation of resources acknowledging the urgency of this mission given the deterioration of approximatley 500,000 books in the collection.[26]

The Brown University Libraries vied for and were awarded a grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in December 1996. In a congratulatory letter NEH Chairman Sheldon Hackney stated that

> Brown's strategic plans for conservation could result in a national model for the effective preservation of major collections, in addition to perserving humanities collections of national significance.[27]

Under Vartan Gregorian's presidency, Brown University became a model school in many areas. At Brown, Vartan Gregorian strove to make a great

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[26]Merrily Taylor, ed., "The Brown University Library and the Challenge to the Finish," BiblioFile (Fall 1996), available from http://www.brown.edu/library/homepage.html; Internet accessed 6 September 1997.

[27]Merrily Taylor, ed., "Preserving the Past, Entering the Future," BiblioFile (Spring 1997), available from http://www.brown.edu/library/homepage.html; Internet accessed 6 September 1997.

university even better. And he did. While at Brown he also continued to lobby for educational reforms. The result of those efforts was a $50 million gift to Brown's Institite of School Reform which was renamed in honor of the donor, Walter Annenberg.[28]

The message the Brown community received from their president was of the necessity of their participation in alleviating the problems of society. He applauded the students for the "50,000 hours you gave annually to Providence and the Rhode Island community."[29]

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[28]Marc Wortman, "Mission Accomplished," Brown Alumni Monthly 5 (July 1997) : 31.

[29]Vartan Gregorian, "The Examined Life," Brown Alumni Monthly 5 (July 1997) : 43.

Interview with Vartan Gregorian

There is much discussion currently in the library profession about the quality of service to the public. Historically, the library mission has been to provide equal access to all. There is some fear within the profession that technological services are changing this.

When questioned about this, Vartan Gregorian began his response with some historical perspective. He pointed out that there were "two institutions created as great equalizers: public schools and public libraries. These institutions were created as a right rather than a privilege. For a century or so these institutions have done tremendous service to democracy."[30]

While recognizing the service these institutions have done for democracy, Vartan Gregorian is also keenly aware that our institutions are faltering, particularly the public school system. He has been very outspoken on the necessity of school reform and recognizes libraries as an integral component of the educational system.

Vartan Gregorian's strong belief in democracy and the institutions that embody the principles of democracy is very much a key to understanding the sense of mission he brings to every position he has held. In his naturalization

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[30]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

ceremony Vartan Gregorian spoke for the entire group. He spoke of Woodrow Wilson's notion of democracy "that one of its purposes is to reduce inhumanity and maximize hope."[31]

While he referred to libraries as "citadels of democracy,"[32] he acknowledged that "unfortunately this is changing. Technology is going to be the dominant force. The future of libraries will be determined not by who has access to how many volumes but by who also has access to audio as well as video."[33]

He pointed out that to have access to different sources is going to be expensive and that the public does not realize how costly it will be. While public libraries are perceived as free, Vartan Gregorian pointed out that there is no free -- somebody has to pay.

The disparity among libraries in terms of technological resources is a widely discussed topic. Vartan Gregorian agrees that the gap between the haves and have-nots will widen unless things change. The have-nots -- those without access to technology -- will be disadvantaged and unable to access materials

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[31]Philip Hamburger, "Searching for Gregorian: Part II," The New Yorker 62 (April 21, 1986): 58.

[32]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[33]Ibid.

available only via technology such as annual reports and professional journals, for example.

The fact that technology has changed and will continue to change how libraries conduct business is a given. However, Vartan Gregorian repeatedly emphasized that the computer is a tool just as books are. He went on to point out that there has to be a peaceful coexistence of the different types of sources. "Libraries must be considered as centers of knowledge. The computer is a tool; you still have to read and write, and still have to think."[34] While acknowledging the importance of technology in libraries and classrooms, Vartan Gregorian also cautions that the technology is not a panacea. He cited Mark Twain's comment about the establishment of transcontinental telephone service "that Maine is connected to San Francisco, but Maine has nothing to say to San Francisco."[35] While there is much fervor on the part of educational institutions to acquire technology, he fears that "the right questions are not being asked"[36] such as "what are your aims?. Technology is a means not an end."[37]

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[34]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid.

With all the emphasis on the wonders of technology and the access to the information it provides, Vartan Gregorian repeatedly stressed that information is not knowledge. Libraries are or should be centers of learning not information. Libraries must be vigilant to maintain a balance between types of sources, otherwise "those with computers at home won't have to go to the library if it is only information they seek."[38]

While there is little dispute about the necessity of acquiring the technology for use in libraries and classrooms, there is debate on the issue of who should control access to information available through the Internet, particularly in regards to children. There have been many heated debates, discussions and in some cases boycotting of libraries by parents over this issue. Many parents believe it is the library's responsibility to monitor the types of information accessed by children via the Internet.

Vartan Gregorian is quite firm in his position on the issue. He agrees that libraries either provide full access to the Internet or none at all. He pointed out that blocking programs do not work. Libraries and librarians cannot censor materials. "Libraries must embody the entire memory of humanity - the good and the bad."[39]

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[38]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[39]Ibid.

Shortly after assuming the presidency of Brown University, Vartan Gregorian became embroiled in a controversy over the expulsion of a student which was portrayed as a freedom of speech issue. In a letter to the editor Vartan Gregorian defended his action as not being about free speech. He went on to clarify the issue by stating that "the rights of the individual to speak freely, to gain an education, to have access to information are all central to the democratic society."[40] Vartan Gregorian has worked diligently to ensure that our institutions continue to uphold these rights.

He understands that the problems of any segment of society become, inevitably, a problem for all of society. The issue of illiteracy, for example, has somehow taken a backseat to all the attention given technology. Vartan Gregorian acknowledged that literacy is a "crucial issue. We have 90 million people who can rely on the visual with 40 million of these functionally illiterate."[41] Technology is not going to solve this problem. In dealing with this problem Gregorian realizes that technology is a barrier for the illiterate as are social and cultural issues. Gregorian believes libraries must play a significant role in solving this problem. Libraries should hold evening teaching sessions

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[40]Vartan Gregorian, "Brown Expulsion Not About Free Speech," New York Times, 21 February 1991, A20.

[41]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

conducted by people whom the students consider a peer. He recommends libraries as the best sites for these courses because people in need of this help are embarrassed to acknowledge this. It is much more acceptable, he contends, for people to be able to say they are going to the library for a couple of hours than it is for them to admit to attending a literacy program. He believes ESL courses should also be conducted at the library for the same reasons. It is also important, he believes, for these courses to be taught by someone the students consider a peer. For example, literacy classes geared for older adults should be taught by someone in the same age bracket. The more comfortable the students are with the learning environment, the more likely they are to stay in the program is the message here.

Libraries should offer and actively promote the best learning environment is an opinion repeated often by Vartan Gregorian. He doesn't understand why today "some libraries have chosen an ancillary role."[42] Public libraries have an important mission: "to educate, to advance knowledge and to serve democracy. Libraries cannot be passive."[43]

He finds it "ironic that in the age of communication and information

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[42]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[43]Ibid.

libraries are on the defensive."[44] He concedes that it is becoming more difficult for libraries to draw patrons because of the competition. Malls and bookstores are providing many of the services offered at libraries. There has to be some differentiation, he maintains, between libraries and these commercial enterprises. To achieve this, he says, "libraries have to resist the tide and not succumb to the fashionable."[45] In this society "there is too much stress on celebrity and entertainment and so much emphasis on the present."[46]

The phenomenal success of bookstores, Vartan Gregorian pointed out, indicates the strength of the book as a resource. While many fear there is no place for books in the electronic library, Vartan Gregorian dismissed this. There will always be books, he asserts. Besides, unlike a book he quipped "you can't throw your laptop at the dog."[47]

In order to achieve this differentiation and for libraries to fulfill their mission, Vartan Gregorian offered some very practical approaches. Libraries, he contends, are "cultural, educational and civic centers"[48] and should be utilized as

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[44] President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

such. Exhibits, events such as town meetings, political debates, author readings -- for example, when an author dies a memorial service could be held during which his/her work could be discussed and read. Gregorian asserts that these types of events should be a part of every public library's program. Using a quote from the Bible, Vartan Gregorian said that libraries must employ a strategy "to compel them to come in."[49]

The preservation of materials is or should be important to every library. Libraries tend to shy away from archival materials and don't stress local history enough.[50] He asserts that it is imperative that local public libraries collect and maintain materials of historical value to their respective communities. The genealogy collection is of vital importance to every public library. It is a very important link to our past.

The role of librarians in the information age is even more significant than ever because it is their mission to "connect the disparate parts."[51] With much more information available, it is the librarian who must connect the student/patron to the information be it via computer, book, audio or video.

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[49]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

Vartan Gregorian worries that schools including library programs are emphasizing technique. He believes "librarians should be the best-educated and cultured people."[52] They must not only know how to find the book but should also have in-depth knowledge of the contents. He provided the example that a librarian working in the humanities department should know the distinction between the first and second editions of Man's Fate. He recommends that librarians should "every two to three years reprofessionalize themselves"[53] to be effective.

The public library, Vartan Gregorian asserts, is a "remarkable institution"[54] providing individuals with the means "to transcend space, geography, circumstance, age, sex, ethnicity, religion."[55] As a young boy he found the library enabled him "to think universally rather than locally, to dream, to aspire, to escape."[56]

Today's library, he went on to explain, is somewhat different. People still go to the library for the reasons cited above. However, they also go to the library

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[52]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid.

for "solitude, company, anonymity, possibility, curiosity, desperately trying to connect and to gain a sense of community."[57]

[57]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

There seems to be no "mission impossible" for Vartan Gregorian. He has taken on each assignment in his career with a strong sense of the mission of the job. Inevitably, the people who work for and with him are caught up in the cause which resulted in astounding success at the New York Public Library and Brown University.

At this point, it is fair to call Vartan Gregorian a national treasure. There are many theories about the key to his success: his exuberance, great intellect and diligence. These qualities, no doubt, play a significant role.

During the course of the interview, Vartan Gregorian stated that libraries must combine "the ideal and the practical."[58] This comment also applicably describes him. While he has a vision of an educational system which will maximize every student's potential, he is also very practical in achieving those goals. He advises, for example, that every schoolchild should be given a library card. Even if only ten percent use the card, out of one million students, that is

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[58]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

100,000 students using a library card.[59] While he would much prefer that everyone use his or her library card, he has realistic expectations.

His vision for an improved educational system recognizes that it will take primarily the efforts of people. In his address to the 1997 graduating class of Brown University he said "our social and cultural institutions can only be as good as the people who serve them."[60]

Throughout his career he has made a point to acknowledge people for their efforts. In the preface to his book, The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan : Policies of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946 he states "I am greatly indebted to ... the reference librarian."[61] At Brown University during his presidency, a building was named after a plant operations worker who served Brown for forty-seven years.[62]

Vartan Gregorian's natural ability to connect with people has become something of a trademark characteristic. Sifting through many anecdotal stories about him, it seems that everyone at Brown University has their own Vartan Gregorian story - some encounter in which they received a bear hug or piece of

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[59]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[60]Vartan Gregorian, "The Examined Life," Brown Alumni Monthly 5 (July 1997) : 42.

[61]Vartan Gregorian, The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan : Politics of Reform and Moderinization, 1880 - 1946 (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1969), viii.

[62]Marc Wortman, "Mission Accomplished," Brown Alumni Monthly 5 (July 1997) : 33.

candy from their president.[63] His departure from Brown was a great disappointment to students and staff.

Vartan Gregorian's strong commitment to students is evident by his determination to connect with them. At Brown he taught a course almost every semester during his presidency and served as advisor to several students each semester.[64] This desire to give to students greatly benefited this author. During the summer of 1997 Gregorian was dividing his time between Brown University, as outgoing president, and his new position at Carnegie Corporation. Despite this hectic schedule, he managed to find the time to talk to a student whom he had never met.

The connection Vartan Gregorian has achieved with students, staff and people of all backgrounds has been integral to his success. His message is all about "connection": the connection of the individual to society, the connection between student and teacher, the connection between society and its institutions. This message is also very specifically addressed to libraries when he stressed that librarians are the "connectors" and the importance that libraries play in connecting us with the past.

As a historian, Vartan Gregorian acknowledges the importance of

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[63]Marc Wortman, "Mission Accomplished," Brown Alumni Monthly 5 (July 1997) : 32.

[64]Ibid, 33.

preserving the past so "we don't fall victim to collective amnesia."[65] Though he has risen to positions of great power and stature he has not forgotten the past. He understands the anxiety of immigrants because he was once a newly-arrived immigrant. He has not forgotten the student experience. He has not forgotten that teachers, family and other mentors assisted him along the way in his quest.

When this is considered, it is not at all surprising that he has taken upon himself the crusade for educational reforms. He simply wants to ensure that every student has the structure, guidance and opportunity to learn that he managed to find on his odyssey from Tabriz to New York.

While most of the material reviewed has discussed Vartan Gregorian in glowing terms, he has encountered some criticism. The gala dinners and fund-raisers to benefit the NYPL were sometimes derided. As president of a university he has been embroiled in controversy from which he has never shied away. A Title IX issue which Brown University took all the way to the Supreme Court and lost was much debated in the press. Many believed the issue should have been dropped long before it reached the Supreme Court to save the University legal expenses.[66] Vartan Gregorian received some harsh criticism for

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[65]President Vartan Gregorian of Carnegie Corporation, telephone interview by Mary Monahan, 13 August 1997, tape recording, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[66]Philip Hamburger, "Searching for Gregorian : Part I," The New Yorker 62 (14 April 1996) : 61.

protracting the battle. However, it would have been uncharacteristic of him to drop an issue in which he firmly believed. In this instance he was criticized for his perseverance.

Much has been written about Vartan Gregorian's career accomplishments. Very little has been revealed about his private life. There are references to his pride of his wife Clare's skill in preparing Armenian dishes. His youngest son, Dareh, when asked about his father said he is as great a father as he is an administrator. It's just that his fathering techniques haven't won him national notoriety.[67] The glimpse into the Gregorian household reveals a close-knit family where respect, warmth and humor abound.

The last word has not been written about Vartan Gregorian. In his position as president of Carnegie Corporation he will continue the mission to produce educational reforms and will no doubt manage to teach a course or two. Of his new position at Carnegie, Gregorian said "I want to deal with the same issues as I did at Brown, but as a giver, not a receiver."[68] This comment referred specifically to the giving and receiving of funds. Still, there is more than a little irony to that statement coming from a man who has already given so much to

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[67]Sara Calian, "Vartan: A Family Man," Brown Daily Herald, 28 October 1988; available from http://www.netspace.org./herald/pleasure/Vartan/Family Man, accessed 26 August 1997.

[68]Marc Wortman, "Mission Accomplished," Brown Alumni Monthly 5 (July 1997) : 33.

the institutions he has served; the students he has taught; the educators, including librarians, he has inspired.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. The public library is one of our truly democratic institutions. Heretofore, the public library was accessible to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and skill levels. Some critics contend that technology is changing this. What is your response?

2. A 1993 literacy study conducted by Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey concluded that approximately 90 million American adults function below the literacy level. Isn't it very possible that these people are becoming even more severely handicapped because they lack the skills required to use even the most basic technology? How do we attack this problem?

3. Some of our leaders, including President Clinton, seem to believe access to the Internet is the key to our future. Isn't this a bit premature since the Internet is in an evolutionary state?

4. Public libraries have changed their focus. Some have embraced the idea of the electronic library. Others market themselves as entertainment centers with Friday

night video "pajama parties" for children. It does seem that public libraries are struggling to redefine themselves. What is your opinion on the direction libraries ought to be headed?

5. What about books? Where do they belong in the high-tech library? Books are as popular as ever given the phenomenal business of the large national bookstore chains. Yet libraries, San Francisco Public Library being a case in point, are discarding books in favor of the technology. Are librarians being overzealous in embracing the technology?

6. Current library education programs reflect the changing nature of library service with the emphasis on technological know-how. Is the very spirit of the library profession being altered by the changing focus of services offered?

7. In a recent article you listed very low-tech ways to save our schools. Not that public libraries need to be saved, but what practical ideas would you offer to make public libraries the great educational resource they should be?

8. You are quoted as saying that working as a page in a library changed your life. Do you think the library as it exists today is capable of doing that for our youth?

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